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Harvard Unaware CIA Funded Book, Seminar

Agency Backed Professor's Mideast Projects

By Charles R. Babcock
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A Harvard University professor of Middle East studies broke university rules by accepting a $45,700 grant from the Central Intelligence Agency to sponsor a conference on Islam without informing the school first, according to a college official.

A. Michael Spence, dean of the faculty of arts and sciences, is investigating a contract under which Prof. Nadav Safran, director of the university's Center for Middle Eastern Studies, reportedly received another $107,430 from the CIA to aid in research and writing of a book on Saudi Arabia.

This information was provided by John Shattuck, Harvard's vice president for public affairs, yesterday.

The book, "Saudi Arabia, The Ceaseless Quest for Security," was published last month by Harvard University Press.

According to Shattuck, Spence said he learned about Safran's CIA grant in a letter from the professor early this month.

After investigating, Spence said, "I have concluded that Professor Safran erred in not following the relevant rules in regard to sponsored projects, and I believe he agrees with that conclusion."

Safran, a native of Egypt, could not be reached for comment.

The conference on Islam fundamentalism is scheduled at Harvard next week and Safran will tell participants about the CIA funding, Spence's statement said. About 90 scholars from the United States and the Middle East are to attend.

CIA spokeswoman Kathy Pherson said the agency's contract for the conference was with Safran, not the university, so it was Safran's responsibility to comply with school rules to disclose the funding source.

Shattuck emphasized that the university was not concerned with the CIA funding itself but with the fact that Safran had not followed the school's rules about disclosing it promptly to school officials.

The Harvard Crimson student newspaper quoted Safran Wednesday as saying he did not share his CIA conference grant with the university, as Harvard's rules require, because he arranged it himself, rather than on behalf of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies.

In a statement earlier this week, Safran said, "I sought and obtained funds from the CIA as an 'independent contractor,' which would permit me to reimburse CMES for expenses incurred."

The Boston Globe reported yesterday that it had obtained a copy of Safran's book contract with the CIA, dated April 13, 1982. It noted that the book contains no reference to the fact that it was the product of CIA funds.

In the mid-1970s, congressional investigations disclosed that the CIA had arranged for publication of hundreds of books as part of a worldwide propaganda campaign. Pherson said she was not aware of Safran's reported book contract, adding, "I don't think that's what you would call secret funding."

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